

City heroes who few in Harrington even know of

Folks, I've lived in Harrington for 24 years. I've seen a lot happen in our city over the years. There is one thing in our city that very rarely gets talked about until today. That's the employees that work at our Public Works Department.

Alan Moore, Leroy Lahman, Glenn Haymen, Dennis Trader, Dudley Clough and Richard Clough. We might see them putting up Christmas decorations or blocking off streets for a parade. Some might see them shut off the water to a home because the water bill wasn't paid. I can honestly tell you that is the one part of their job that they dislike the most.

We don't like seeing them when snow falls, and they fill the driveways with snow from the street. We don't like them when they block off a street when a water line breaks and the road needs to be dug up. I can tell you folks I visited our Public Works Department several times a week — not to chew them out, not to find fault, just to let them know that they are appreciated for what they do for all of us.

They get out of bed in the middle of the night to take care of a clog in the sewer line. To take care of broken water lines so when you wake up and turn on the faucet, water comes out. When you bring brush down to the city barn, most of the time, someone is there and will help you unload your vehicle. They keep the streets clean from trash, broken bottles, limbs that fall. Nobody cares about any of that until it happens to you.

So, let me tell you another side that none of you have seen from these wonderful employees of the Public Works Department. One day, I was pulling a broken limb down Franklin Street to the city barn on a Wednesday. Out of nowhere comes a smiling face. One of the employees I mentioned took the broken limb I was dragging and hauled it for me to the tractor.

He didn't have to do that. I was

extremely happy to have the helping hand because I had a heart attack not a long time before this event. I had a warm feeling come over me to see a group of our city employees helping someone who really needed help that day.

You know, in all the years I've known these gentlemen, I've never heard them gripe once about going to the aid of any of the citizens in our city. But I sure have heard a lot of people gripe because they were not able to use a street [because of work] being done, or [did they] ever stop to think why they blocked off a street in the first place?

To keep your children safe, to keep you from getting hurt by accidentally driving into a trench they had just dug. Or blocking a manhole where work is being done. Folks, they do this to keep us out of harm's way. They have a thankless job.

Think about this: when you saw one of them working, did you ever think to stop and say "Hi" or "Thank you for what you do"? Why not? Drive down to the city barn; give them a little note of thanks.

They honestly don't expect it, because it is just part of the job they have to do every day. I think the city should have an appreciation day, where citizens can come and visit all the wonderful people that work for our city. In most cases, you have never seen them unless they are on your street or a street you're traveling on.

Employees at City Hall are all the same way. Joyce at the City Hall front desk meets almost everyone that stops in unless she is off or busy doing something else. Every city employee that I have had the honor to meet all have the same qualities.

Our Parks and Recreation Department also has warm, caring people. Did you know that they grew a vegetable garden for the citizens to use if they need food? Surprise! Stop by just for a moment and say "Thanks." I know, it takes time out of your day. Think how much better your day is

because of what they do for all of us.

Do you think they like sending out tax bills? They get them, also. They take a lot of abuse, and they say, "Thank you. Have a nice day." They don't deserve that. Do they make mistakes? Yes, they do. Do you ever make a mistake or two? Do you ever say "I'm sorry" when you make the mistake? They do.

Send a note to each department; tell them what you like and what you don't. Changes might happen if they know there is a concern or problem. You won't find more warm, loving people than what we have in Harrington.

Our Police Department is the greatest it can be. I've actually gone out on a ride-along. You would be amazed what you will see on just one shift that they patrol. I know I've seen an officer put his life on the line, not knowing what to expect.

Folks, his name is Dustin Fraley. We heard a train whistle that kept blowing over and over again. There was a very thin entranceway up to where the engineer sits. If the person had a gun, that person could have fired on the officer and he could have died. If he didn't go on the train, the person who was playing with the controls could have released the emergency brake. What no one knew at the time: On the same track as the engine, near Greenwood, was a line of 20 tanker cars full of gasoline. He prevented the possibility of a huge explosive problem. I told the mayor he needed an award for his actions. You know what Mayor Tony Moyer told me? "No, he didn't; it was his job."

Every member of the Police Department is an outstanding police officer. They have an ugly job in the eyes of some. "How could you arrest my child? There is no way my child could have done that."

For most of us, we believe that and we don't want to hear that until we see the evidence. Folks, one thing I know: They have the evidence

in photos, video or witnesses. Our Chief Norman Barlow gets the best, and because of his efforts, we, for the most part, have a safe and secure city.

Take a few moments and say "Hi," and thank them for what they do for us. Watch a face smile.

Pete Karras
Harrington